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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/29/2019
TAGS: [BU](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: WASHINGTON RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BULGARIA
ON UKRAINE-CUBA ARMS DEAL

REF: SOFIA 000236

Classified By: ISN Acting DAS Ann Ganzer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This is a action request. Please see action request at paragraph 4.

¶2. (C) Summary: The Government of Bulgaria (GOB) requested U.S. views on a pending arms-related transfer to Cuba. Specifically, Bulgarian arms broker, "Assa Engineering, Ltd.," applied for a license to mediate an arms deal between Ukrainian state owned enterprise, "GXVIF" (company name transliterated from Cyrillic) and the Cuban Ministry of Defense. The deal would involve the sale of parts for the Pechora (C-125) air defense system. In accordance with the terms of the confidential 1996 Arms Transfer Agreement between the United States and Bulgaria, the GOB agreed to adopt a shared policy of extreme restraint with respect to the transfer of armaments and sensitive dual-use goods and technologies to countries designated by the United States as state sponsor of terrorism. Cuba is designated as a state sponsor of terrorism under U.S. law, and the GOB is aware of its obligation under the agreement mentioned above. However, in light of the willingness of the new administration in changing U.S. policy towards Cuba, the GOB is seeking an official position from the United States Government on this issue. As indicated below, Cuba remains on the list of state Sponsors of Terrorism and the USG would not/not support the transfer of armaments or sensitive dual-use items to Cuba. End Summary.

Current USG Views on Arms Transfer to Cuba

¶3. (C) Washington has reviewed the notification from the GOB regarding Assa's license application to broker an arms sale between Ukraine and Cuba. International media has reported on the Administration's modification of Cuba policy to permit increased family travel and remittances to Cuba and readiness to engage the Government of Cuba (GOC) on matters of mutual interest. However, the President has indicated his belief that the embargo on Cuba should remain in place as an inducement for improved human rights practices on the part of the Cuban government. Cuba remains designated as a stated sponsor of terrorism under U.S. law, and Bulgarian transfers of certain military equipment to Cuba could trigger the application of U.S. sanctions. Accordingly, Washington does not support the transfer of armaments and sensitive dual-use goods and technologies to the GOC.

Action Request

¶4. (C/REL BULGARIA) Post is requested to approach appropriate GOB officials and provide the following USG response to the transfer of armaments and sensitive dual-use

goods and technologies to the GOC:

-- Inform GOB officials that the USG objects to the transfer of armaments and sensitive dual-use goods and technologies to Cuba.

-- Explain that comprehensive U.S. sanctions on Cuba continue in place and Cuba remains on our list of state sponsors of terrorism.

-- Advise that spare parts for air defense systems qualify as "lethal military equipment (LME)," as the term is defined in U.S. law. Under the U.S. sanctions laws, the United States is required to impose sanctions on any government that has provided LME to a U.S.-designated state sponsor of terrorism. And as previously noted, Cuba is so designated.

-- Request Bulgarian approval to discuss this proposed export with appropriate Ukrainian officials to convey USG concerns with arms exports to Cuba and the possible sanctions implications under U.S. law.

15. (U) Post's assistance is greatly appreciated. Department points of contact are Meg Mitchell, (202) 647-2433, mitchellmt2@state.sgov.gov and Lou Ganem, (202) 647-2329, ganemlc@state.sgov.gov.
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